

# **An Analysis of King County Funded Domestic Violence Victim Services Service Trends, 1995-1999**

## **Introduction**

King County and the Community Services Division have made a strong commitment to evaluating County funded programs. The King County Framework Policies for Human Services, adopted in 1999, states as one of its policies that “King County shall evaluate the contributions of the programs it funds...” and “shall work with service providers to collect measurable outcomes that result from their service.” This review of King County funded domestic violence victim services is a step in support of that principle.

King County has been funding domestic violence victim services for over a decade. While there have been reports produced on the state of domestic violence in King County, there has not been a thorough review of King County funded victim services since 1990. At that time, a preliminary evaluation of domestic violence services was included in the Strategies for Strengthening the Family: A Review of County Performance and Recommendations for Future Steps report. It is time for a more complete assessment.

The present report documents changes in county funded services over the past five years—1995 to 1999. Who is being served and how has that changed over the past five years? What types of services are being provided and in what amounts? The report also examines what the impacts of these services are in the lives of victims and their families?

This is not a review of the entire domestic violence landscape or of all victim services provided. Much of that work was done in the Human Services Roundtable’s recently released Safer Families, Stronger Communities?, which is a progress report on domestic violence in King County over the past decade. The focus of this assessment is limited to the system of domestic violence victim services funded by King County’s Community Services Division. It is an incomplete picture since it does not include programs operating without King County funds or mainstream programs that serve domestic violence victims but do not distinguish between them and other clients.

This report’s primary source of information is the Domestic Violence Victim Services Client Information System. This system has been in place for over ten years, with two revisions. It collects demographic, abuse history, service provision and outcome information on victims served by County-funded agencies. It was developed in collaboration with the agency directors and is periodically reviewed by them. Other sources of information include contract performance information submitted quarterly by agencies, the Safer Families, Stronger Communities? report, as well as other research articles. Agency directors reviewed the content of this report for accuracy and completeness.

Agencies reporting to the Domestic Violence Victim Services Client Information System between 1995 and 1999, include:

- ◆ Advocates for Abused and Battered Lesbians (now the Northwest Network of Bisexual, Lesbian and Transgender Survivors)
- ◆ Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services (ADWAS)
- ◆ Anita Vista Transitional Housing (YWCA program)
- ◆ Broadview Emergency Shelter (Fremont Public Association program)
- ◆ Catherine Booth House (Salvation Army)
- ◆ Consejo Counseling and Referral Service
- ◆ Domestic Abuse Women's Network (DAWN)
- ◆ East Cherry YWCA
- ◆ Eastside Domestic Violence Program (EDVP)
- ◆ Hickman House (Salvation Army)
- ◆ Jewish Family Service
- ◆ New Beginnings
- ◆ Refugee Women's Alliance (REWA)
- ◆ Seattle Indian Health Board
- ◆ Seattle YWCA (downtown shelter)

# The Background of Domestic Violence Victim Services in King County.

## History

King County government has been supporting domestic violence victim services in a concerted fashion for over twelve years. In 1988, King County developed a five-year Domestic Violence Comprehensive Plan to address the growing crisis of domestic violence in our community. Leadership was provided by the Department of Judicial Administration, in cooperation with the Community Services Division Women's Program, with advice and input from an advisory group representing a cross-section of human services planners, service providers, justice agencies and the community-at-large. The Comprehensive Plan was updated five years later and continues to be used to guide King County government's broad campaign against domestic violence.

Adding momentum to the Comprehensive Plan was the Health and Human Services fund, which was established in 1988 to support a variety of social service interventions, among them domestic violence victim services. This fund was used to greatly expand King County's support of domestic violence victim services, with a particular emphasis on increasing services to under-served populations—refugees, women of color, non-English speaking, Deaf women and lesbians. The HHS fund also allowed the development of a system-wide information system to collect demographic and service information on the victims served through King County-funded programs. Although the HHS fund is no longer a separate funding stream, King County has continued its commitment to funding domestic violence victim services.

Domestic violence victim services received another boost in 1990 when a portion of the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET) revenues were directed to fund local criminal justice activities, including domestic violence victim services. The same year, through Proposition 2, King County voters approved a 0.1 percent increase in the sales tax for criminal justice purposes. These funds allowed an expansion of domestic violence victim services.

## System Components

To understand the changes in victim services and to appropriately assess their effectiveness, one needs to understand the variety of community-based programs available to domestic violence victims. A thorough description of the community-based victim services system components was described in the Safer Families, Stronger Communities? report. A brief description of the components is presented below:

- Shelters:** are accessible at all times and offer victims temporary refuge from an abusive situation. Some are confidential shelters that keep the location confidential in order to protect victims. Others are not confidential, but with specific domestic violence victim services.

**Safe Homes:** provide confidential shelter in a private home.

**Transitional Housing:** provides victims and their children with both a place to stay and necessary services for longer periods as they search for permanent housing.

**Community-Based Advocates:** work within community-based agencies. They are the primary link between a victim seeking assistance and the complex network of service systems. They assist their clients in meeting their basic needs and developing safety plans and provide ongoing problem solving, support groups, referrals, and personal support services to victims.

**Therapeutic Support and Child Care:** provide support and child care to children involved in domestic violence situations.

**Education and Prevention Programs:** offer information on dating and domestic violence and its dangers in schools and other venues. In some cases, the programs offer counseling and other interventions to those already involved in violent relationships.

## **Changes**

Several changes over the past decade have had an impact on domestic violence victim services in King County. These changes have been to the population of victims as well as to the system of service organizations and provide a context within which to assess the service system's overall functioning. Most of these changes were noted in Safer Families, Stronger Communities? All of these changes, and others not mentioned, may be affecting who seeks domestic violence victims services, the types of services they receive, and the services' effectiveness in moving victims to greater safety and self-sufficiency. These factors should be kept in mind as the trends in King County's domestic violence victims services system are considered.

### **Demographic Changes**

Over the past decade, the population of King County has increased 11% from 1,507,000 to 1,677,000. This growth has been proportionately greater in the South and East subregions of King County. Along with the geographical shift has been a cultural shift. Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic populations have been the fastest growing over the past ten years, increasing nearly 41% and 34% respectively.

### **Housing Affordability**

Housing affordability is a growing concern in King County. The average sale price of a house in King County rose from \$169,202 in 1990 to \$241,734 in 1998. During the same time, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment increased from \$537/month to \$708/month.

**Welfare Reform**

Women fleeing abusive situations often are forced to rely on public assistance to provide for themselves and their children. The passage of welfare reform legislation in 1996 greatly changed the way federal and state assistance was provided and transformed the way welfare offices address the problem of domestic violence.

**Child Care**

Access to quality child care is a challenge for all working parents. For women fleeing domestic violence, the challenges are compounded by limited financial resources and the need to keep her location and that of her children confidential.

**Access to Health Care**

Increasing health care costs, growing operational losses, and provider realignment characterize the current health care industry. For domestic violence victims, these changes have a number of implications. For instance, if they lack health care insurance, they are more likely to rely upon emergency medical services or the local community health care clinics for primary health care. And, any “pre-existing conditions” may not be treated for up to three months.

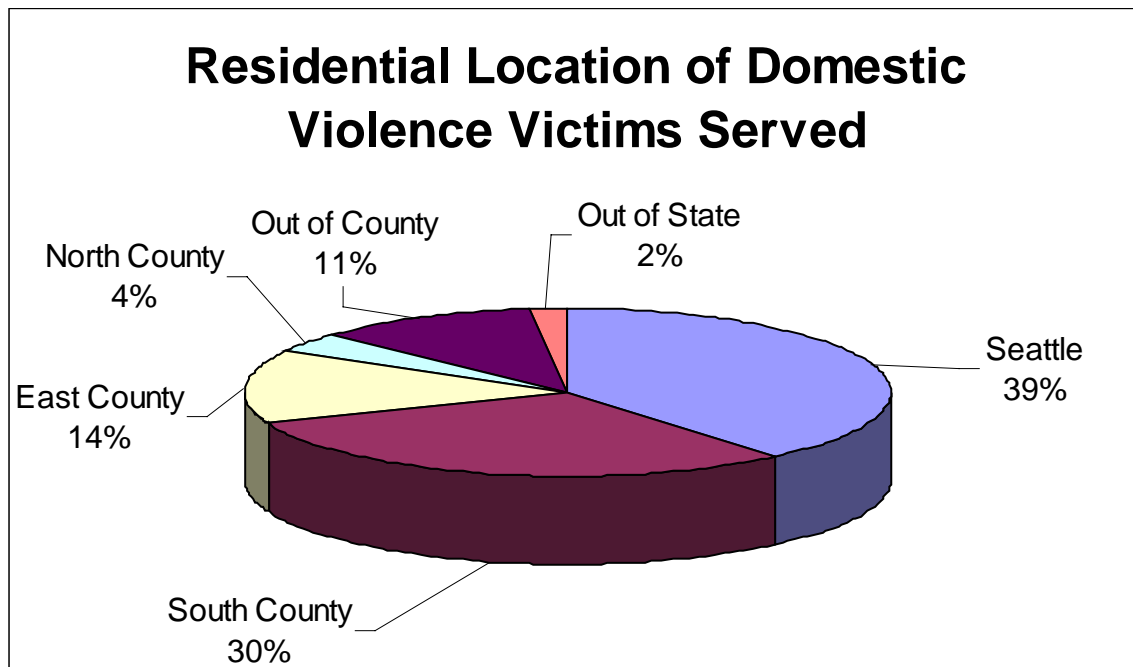
## Profile of People Served

Between 1995 and 1999, the King County-funded domestic violence programs served nearly 11,000 adult victims face-to-face, with the number served growing slightly every year. At least this number of children accompanied their parents into service. In 1999, intakes were completed on 2,254 clients, not including brief, one-time-only contacts, such as information and referral requests or crisis line calls. They were accompanied by 2,330 children. According to reports from service providers, ten of thousands of additional contacts are made with unknown victims over the telephone each year.

Some client characteristics have remained relatively constant during this five-year period while others have fluctuated. This information is useful in that it can guide us in how to fashion services to best fit domestic violence victims.

### Client Demographics

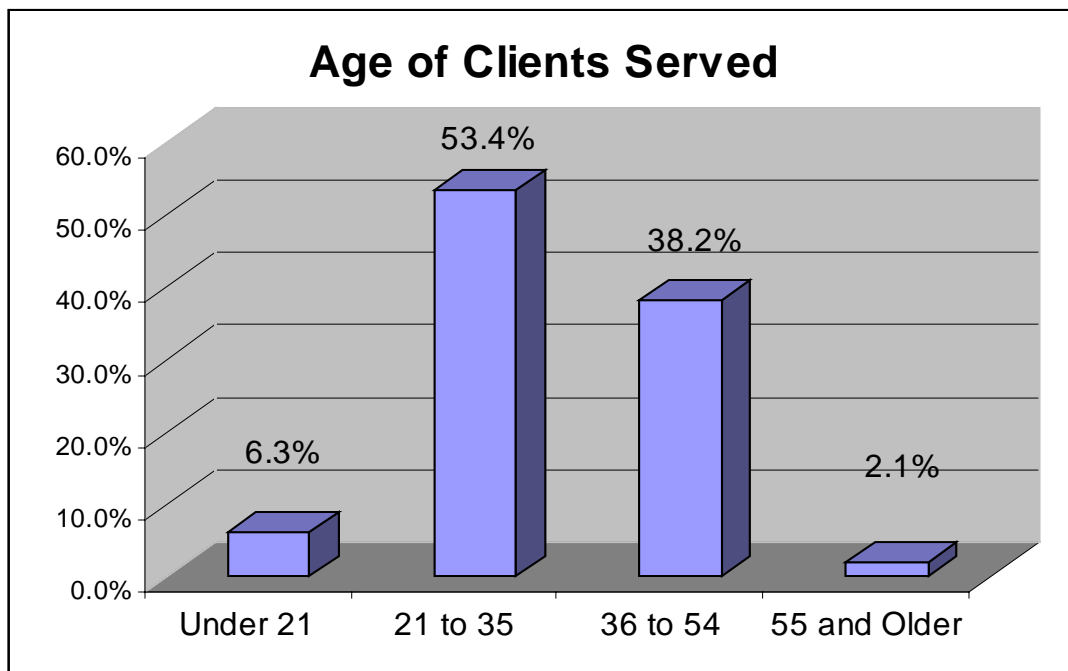
- Clients served in King County's domestic violence victim services system come from all over the county, the state and the nation. While the bulk of clients are from King County (87% in 1999), residents from forty-four other states and Canadian provinces were served during the past five years.
- Within King County, the largest percentage of clients reside in Seattle (39%) and South County (30%) with lesser numbers from East County (14%) and North County (4%).



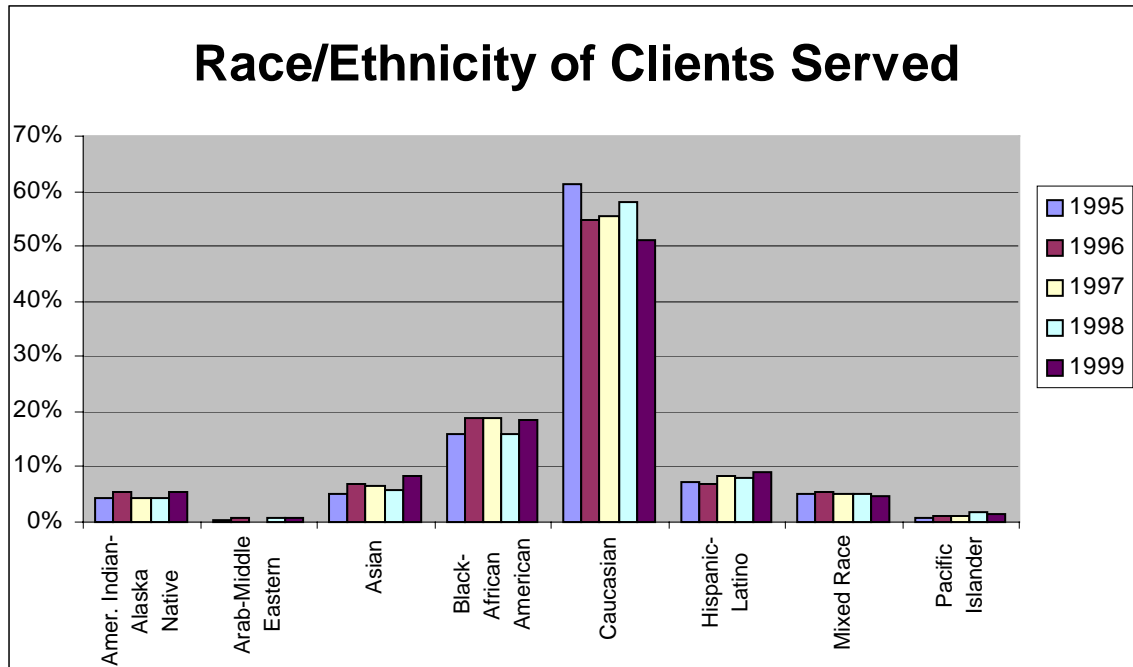
- The percentage served from unincorporated areas of King County has slightly decreased over the past five years, from 13.5% in 1995 to 11.9% in 1999. This

corresponds to proportionate decrease in the percentage of residents living in unincorporated areas as annexations and incorporations have taken place. The recent establishment of rurally located services, such as Island Domestic Violence Outreach Services on Vashon Island, might be expected to reverse this trend in the near future.

- The average age of clients served has stayed constant over the past five years at about 34 years of age. Ages ranged from 14 to 80, with 6.3% under 21, 53.4% between 21 and 35, 38.2% between 36 and 54 and 2.1% 55 or older.



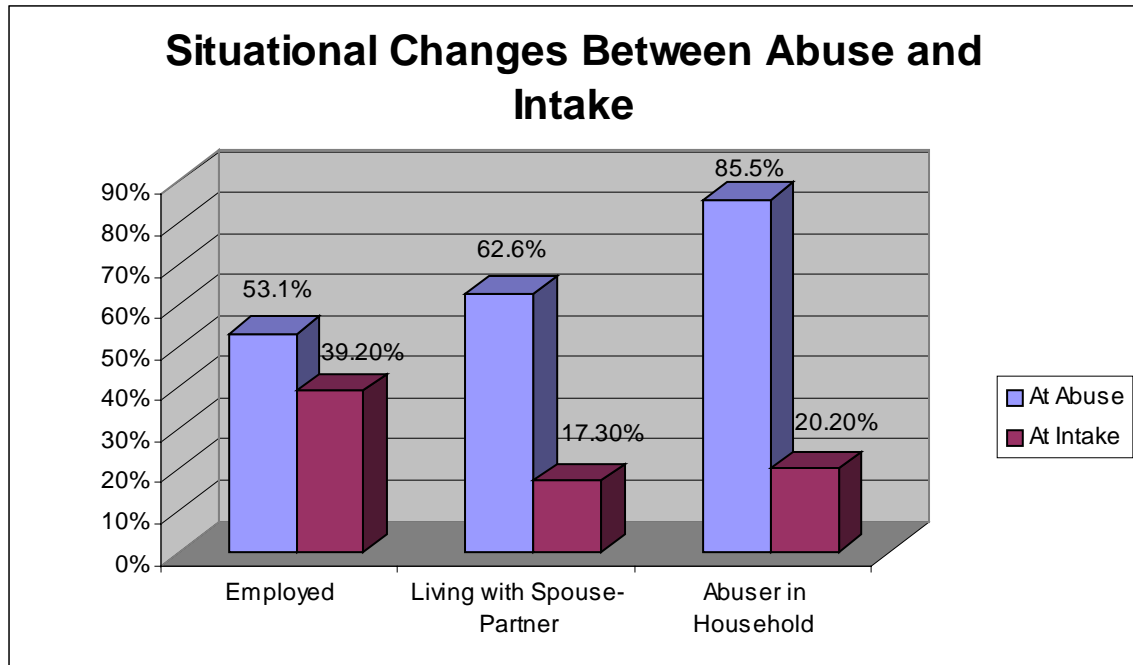
- Almost all victims served are female (96.3%).
- Approximately 40% of the clients served have disabilities. Clients self-identify a range of disabilities, but of those with disabilities, the most common are substance abuse (33.5%), mental health problems (28.0%), hidden disabilities, such as epilepsy (23.8%), and physical disabilities (20.6%). Service provider agencies report these figures may substantially underreport the percentage of clients with disabilities, especially those with mental health and substance abuse problems, since disclosure on these issues often does not occur until some time after intake.
- The proportion of people of color served has gone up considerably over the past five years, from 38.7% in 1995 to 48.8% in 1999. The biggest increase has been among Asian clients who were 5.1% of those served in 1995 but 8.5% of those served in 1999. The increase is larger than expected from the overall increase in people of color living in King County. The percentage of people of color living in King County increased by 3.3% between 1990 and 1998 (the last year for which figures are currently available), from 16.7% of the total population to 20%.



- The need for interpreters among clients has nearly doubled over the past five years. While 7.9% of all clients needed an interpreter in 1995, last year 14.6% of the clients needed an interpreter.

### Client Living Situation

- Just under half (43.8%) of the clients served were receiving government assistance at the time of intake.
- Clients generally have gone through a tremendous amount of upheaval immediately prior to seeking service. Forty-five percent leave their spouse or partner between the time of most recent abuse and the time they sought service. At intake, clients were most likely to be living alone or only with their children (34.7%) or in a shelter or safe home (17.2%), whereas at time of abuse the most common living situation was with spouse or partner (62.6%). Since the abusers are often spouses and partners, it is not surprising to find that the abuser was usually living in the household at the time of abuse (85.5%). But by the time of intake, only 20.2% of the clients were still living with the abuser.

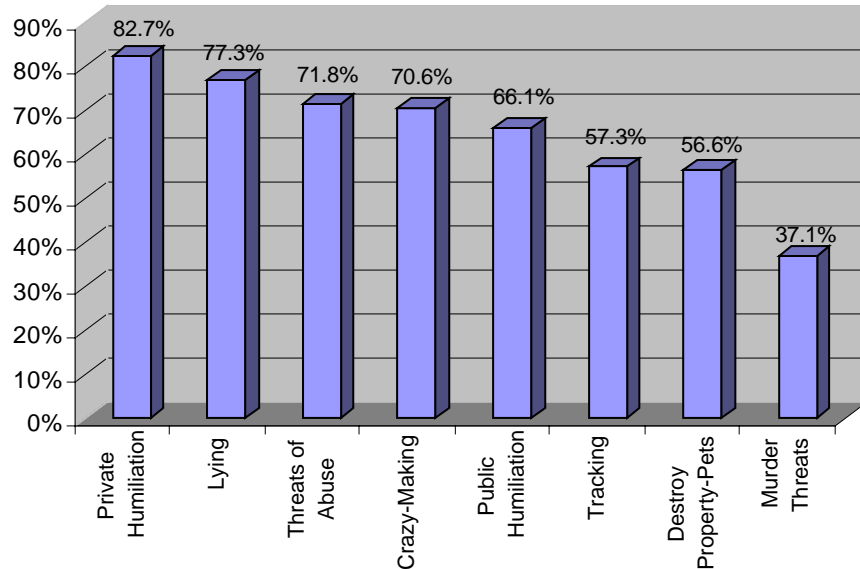


- A number of clients lose their jobs in this transition period. While over half (53.1%) were employed full-time or part-time at the time of abuse, only 39.2% were still employed when seeking service.
- More children are involved in the domestic violence situation than adult victims. The majority of victims (57%) are accompanied by children into service, at an average of 1.9 children per family with children.

### Abusive Situation

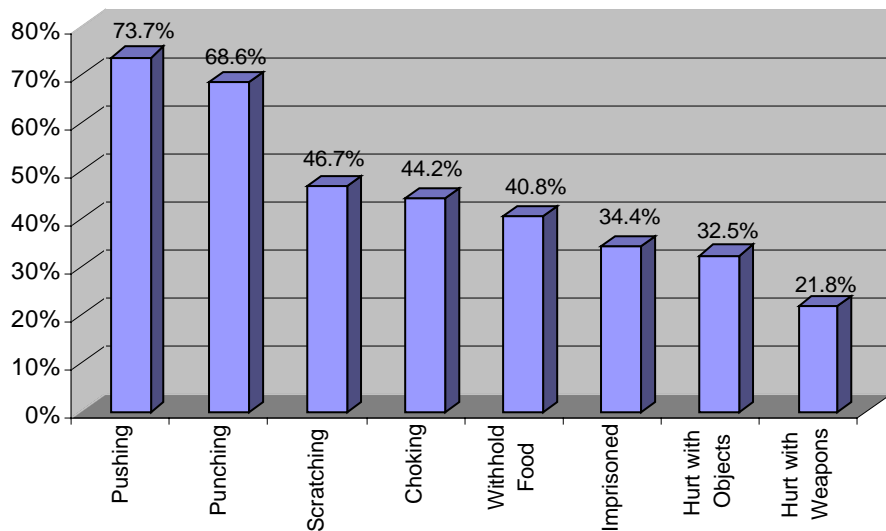
- Usually, the person doing the abuse is a spouse or long-term partner (54.6%). Other frequent abusers are boyfriend/girlfriend (21.3%), ex-spouse or ex-partner (10.0%) or ex-boyfriend/ex-girlfriend (8.5%).
- Most clients have been in the abusive relationships for more than two years (73.1%). Just less than a quarter (23.6%) have been in the relationship for over ten years.
- Most clients have experienced both emotional and physical abuse. Among the types of emotional abuse most frequently experienced are: private humiliation (82.7%), lying (77.3%), threats of physical abuse (71.8%), and crazy-making (when the abuser deliberately confuses and disorients the victim) (70.6%). Other serious types of emotional abuse experienced are tracking (includes stalking and similar activities) (57.3%) and destruction of property and pets (56.6%).

## Types of Emotional Abuse Experienced

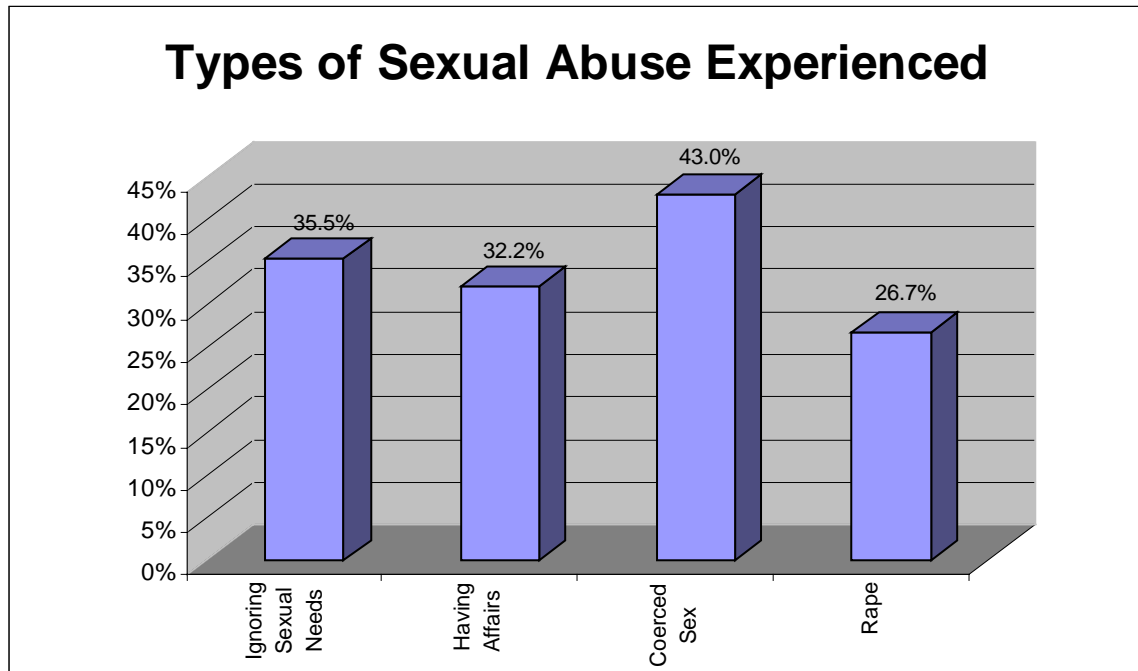


- Among the physical types of abuse, the most frequently experienced are: pushing (73.7%), punching (68.6%), scratching (46.7%), and choking (44.2%). Being hurt with weapons occurred for 21.8% of the victims.

## Types of Physical Abuse Experienced



- Almost half of the women also experience sexual abuse. This usually takes the form of their partner coercing sex (43.0%), ignoring their sexual needs (35.5%), having affairs (32.2%), or raping them (26.7%).



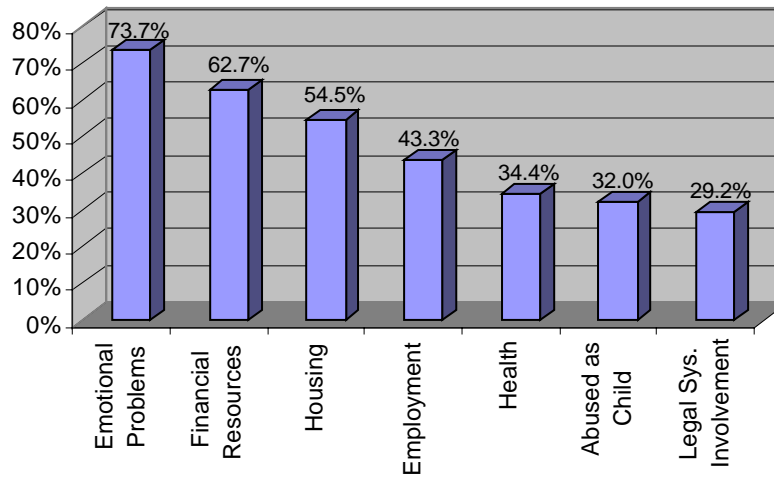
- The effects of abuse are wide-ranging. Most victims report that they are depressed (90.1%). Almost half (45.5%) needed mental health services, almost one-third (32.4%) thought of suicide, and 17.7% started abusing drugs as a result of the abuse. The physical effects of abuse are less frequent but still common. Over 20% of the victims needed emergency medical treatment at one time or the other and another third needed medical assistance but did not seek it. Almost 13% had been hospitalized as a result of the abuse.

### Client Issues and Needs

At intake, clients' primary issues and unmet service needs were identified. Following are the most common issues and needs facing clients entering victim services programs.

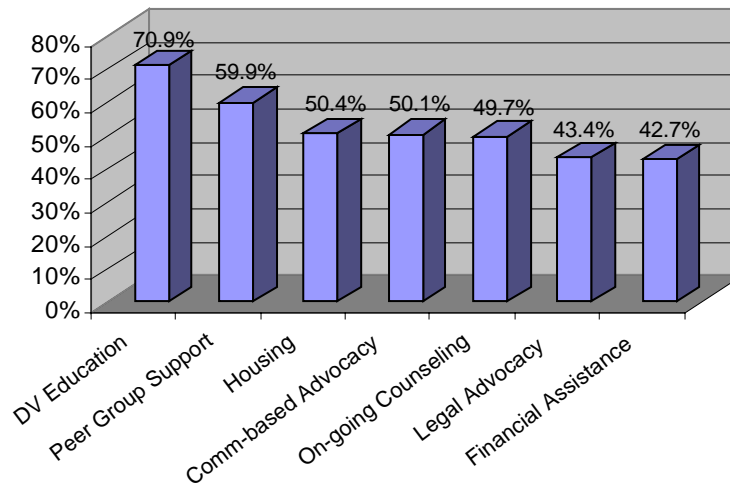
- The most pressing client issue was emotional problems (73.7%).
- Lack of financial resources (62.7%) was the second most common issue facing clients.
- Other frequent client issues were: housing (54.5%), employment (43.3%), health (34.4%), client abused as child (32.0%), and involvement with the legal system (29.2%).

## Clients' Primary Issues at Intake



- The most common unmet service need of clients as identified by service providers was domestic violence education (70.9%).
- Other service needs facing over half the clients were: peer group support (59.9%), housing (50.4%), and community-based advocacy (50.1%).
- The service need that has shown the largest increase is legal advocacy. This increased as an unmet service need from 36.7% of the clients in 1995 to 48.4% in 1999.

## Clients' Primary Service Needs at Intake

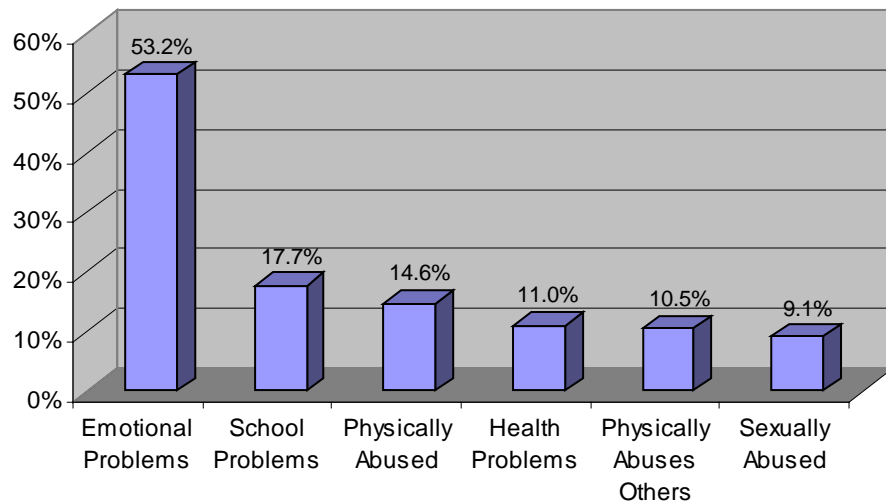


### Children's Issues and Needs

As mentioned earlier, more children entered the domestic violence victim services system than adult clients; 11,686 children accompanied their parents into service between 1995 and 1999. So, attending to children and assessing their service needs is another significant task for service providers. Clients were asked at intake about the children's issues and unmet service needs, as well as their own.

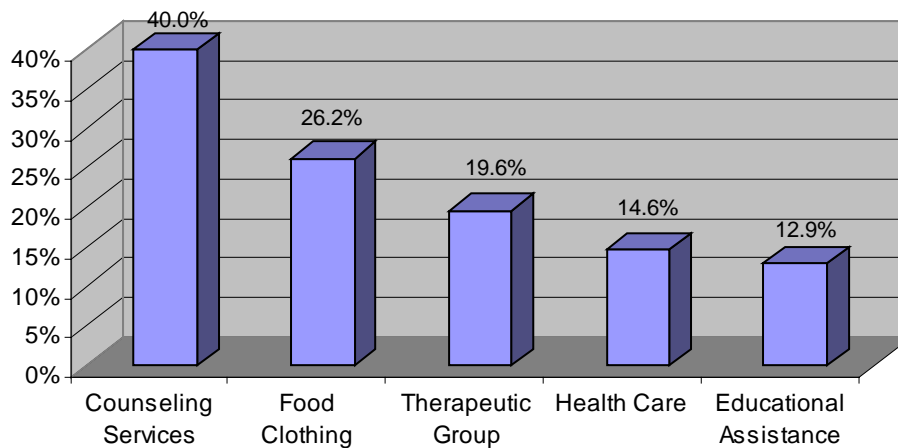
- Of those with children, the most frequent issue facing their children was emotional problems (53.2%).
- Other common issues for children were school problems (17.7%), physically abused (14.6%), health problems (11.0%), physically abuses others (10.5%), and sexually abused (9.1%). It should be noted that abuse issues are often not disclosed by clients at intake, so the percentages presented here are probably an under-report of these problems.

## Children's Primary Issues at Intake



- The most common unmet service needs for children were counseling services (40.0%), food or clothing (26.2%), and therapeutic group (19.6%).
- Other common service needs for children were health care (14.6%) and educational assistance (12.9%).

## Children's Primary Service Needs at Intake



## Justice System Involvement

Clients were also asked at intake about their level of involvement with the police and courts.

- Two-thirds of the clients or their families had been involved with the police due to domestic violence.
- Almost half of the clients (49.0%) had sought a court order of some sort (restraining order, protection order, etc.) due to domestic violence. This has gone down slightly over the past five years, from 50.1% in 1995 to 45.4% in 1999. Of those who sought a court order, two-thirds (65.9%) had a valid order in effect at intake.
- For clients who had had some involvement with the justice system, law enforcement officials were involved in the latest domestic violence incident in 73.4% of the cases.
- When law enforcement was involved, the clients reported that the abuser was arrested in half the cases (50.4%). The client was arrested in 7.4% of the cases.

## Services Received and Their Impacts

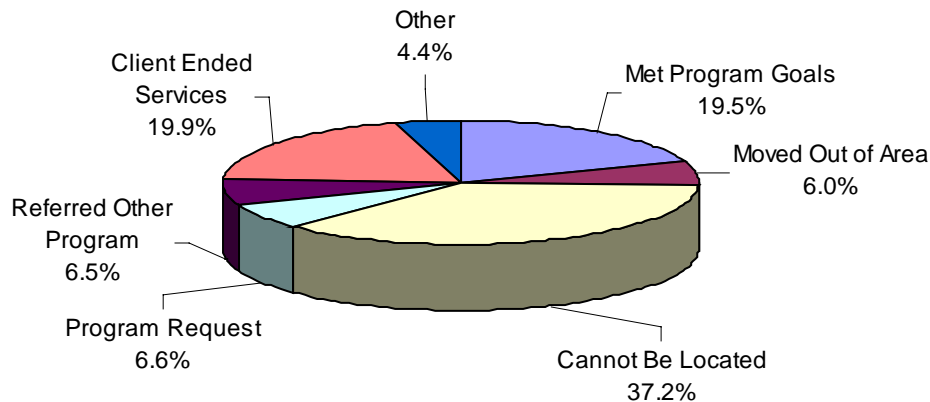
King County-funded domestic violence victim services programs submit progress reports on clients served upon program exit or at six months after intake, whichever comes first. These reports document the services received, changes in clients' situations and the impacts of service. It should be recognized that, especially for community advocacy programs, services are likely to extend for quite a time beyond intake. Therefore, the service levels discussed for these longer-term programs must be seen as only the initial levels and not the total service amount a client would receive before successful termination. The average time in service for clients completing the progress/exit reports was 93 days.

In addition, progress reports are submitted on three-quarters of the clients with intakes. It is not completely certain why some progress reports are not received. It is known that a few progress reports are excluded because the client exit identification code can not be matched to any client identification code from intake—a requirement for data entry. Often clients are not available to respond to status questions at report time. The very nature of domestic violence often precludes direct inquiry of clients about current abuse, living situations, and their perspective on progress. Service providers in reviewing this report offered these additional explanations: 1) lack of staff resources to do follow-ups with exiting clients, and 2) staff turnover, which coupled with insufficient County-provided information system training, leads to lack of awareness about the importance of the exit information. All these factors call for caution in interpreting progress report information.

### Status at Progress Report Time

- Most clients had terminated from the service programs at time of the progress report. On average only 13.3% of the clients were still active in the programs. This did increase slightly over the years, from 9.5% in 1995 to 17.0% in 1999.
- For those clients who had terminated, the most common reason reported by staff was that they could no longer be located or contacted by the program staff (37.2%). Other frequent reasons were: client asked to end services (19.9%) and client met program goals (19.5%).
- There was some shift in these percentages over the years. From 1995 to 1999, the percentage of clients that could not be contacted shrank from 47.6% to 31.3% and the percentage meeting program goals went from 17.9% to 23.6%.

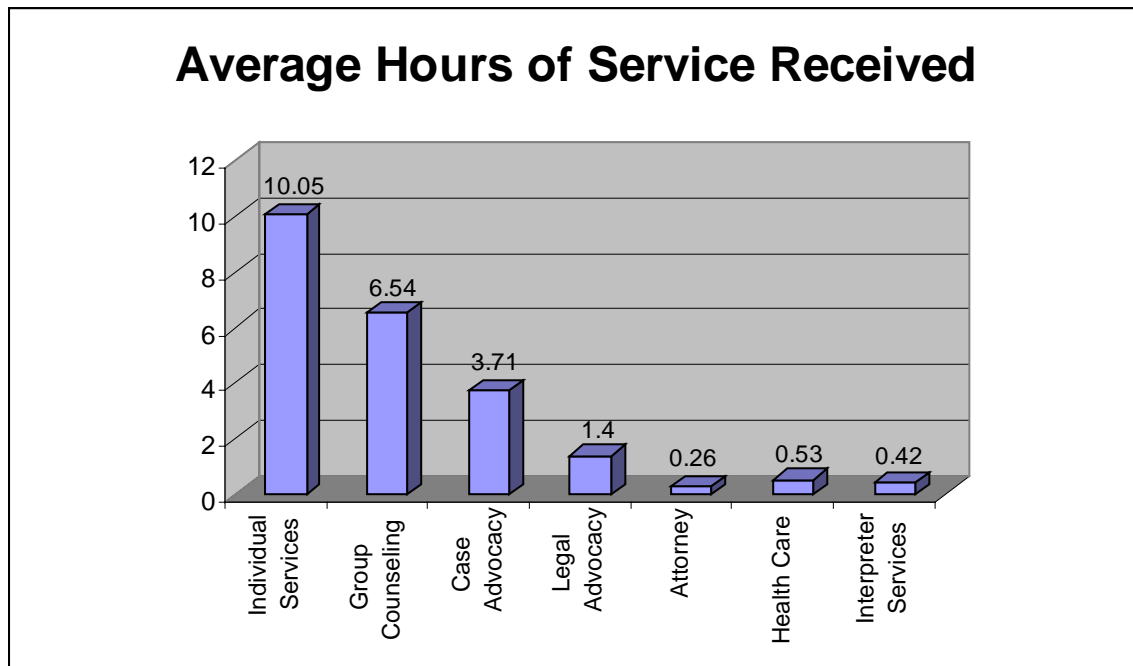
## Clients' Exit Status



### Services Received

- Clients were in the programs for an average of three months at the time of the progress report. The average length of time in program before the report has increased over the past five years, from 80 days in 1995 to 97.5 days in 1999. Just under half of the clients (49.3%) had been in the domestic violence victim services program for less than one month. Only 18.4% of the clients were in the program for over six months at the time of the progress report.
- Clients were served most frequently at community-based advocacy programs. Nearly two-thirds (61.4%) were served by community-based advocates. Of these, 3.6% received parallel services from other types of victim service programs, usually transitional housing. Use of community advocacy services had held constant between 1995 and 1998, but took a significant drop in 1999 when the number of clients served in this type of program went from 1,162 (in 1998) to 857 (in 1999).
- Over one-third of the clients (35.6%) were served at emergency shelters.
- The use of transitional housing services has steadily risen over the past five years. In 1995 only ten clients were served in County-funded, domestic violence transitional housing programs. By 1999, this number had risen to 172. It should be noted that more domestic violence victims received transitional housing than reported by these figures. Transitional housing programs outside the County's domestic violence funding stream were not included in the information system. However, it is generally acknowledged that there was a substantial increase in transitional housing capacity for domestic violence victims during this period and that this was the primary cause of the increasing numbers.
- Clients on average received nearly twenty-three (22.91) hours of direct service during the report period. There was a considerable range in direct service from 0 hours to

over 1,000 hours. The services include: individual services (counseling and assessment), group counseling, case advocacy, legal advocacy, attorney time, health care and interpreter services.

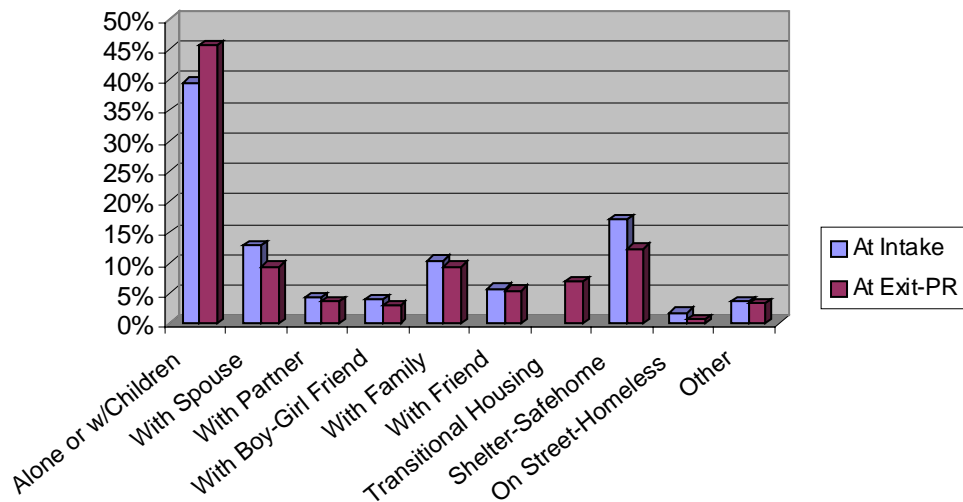


- Generally, the level of service has held constant over the years with the exception of substantial increases in individual services and interpreter services. Average hours per client of individual service rose from 8.41 hours in 1995 to 12.41 hours in 1999. Interpreter services increased from .19 hours per client in 1995 to .63 hours in 1999.
- Along with the hourly services, those clients in emergency shelters, safe homes, or transitional housing received an average of 25 bednights of shelter. Since 57% of the clients are accompanied by children, even more bednights were provided to children—an average of 26 children bednights per sheltered client, for a total of 51 bednights per sheltered family.

### Situational Changes

- The most common living situation at progress report time was “alone or with children only.” On average 45.7% said this was their living situation and this percentage did not change much over the five-year period.
- Only 13% reported that they lived with a spouse or partner. This is a significant drop from the time of abuse when 62.6% of the clients said they were living with spouse or partner and even a slight drop from intake when 17.3% said this was their living situation.

## Living Situation Comparison - Intake vs. Exit- Progress Report



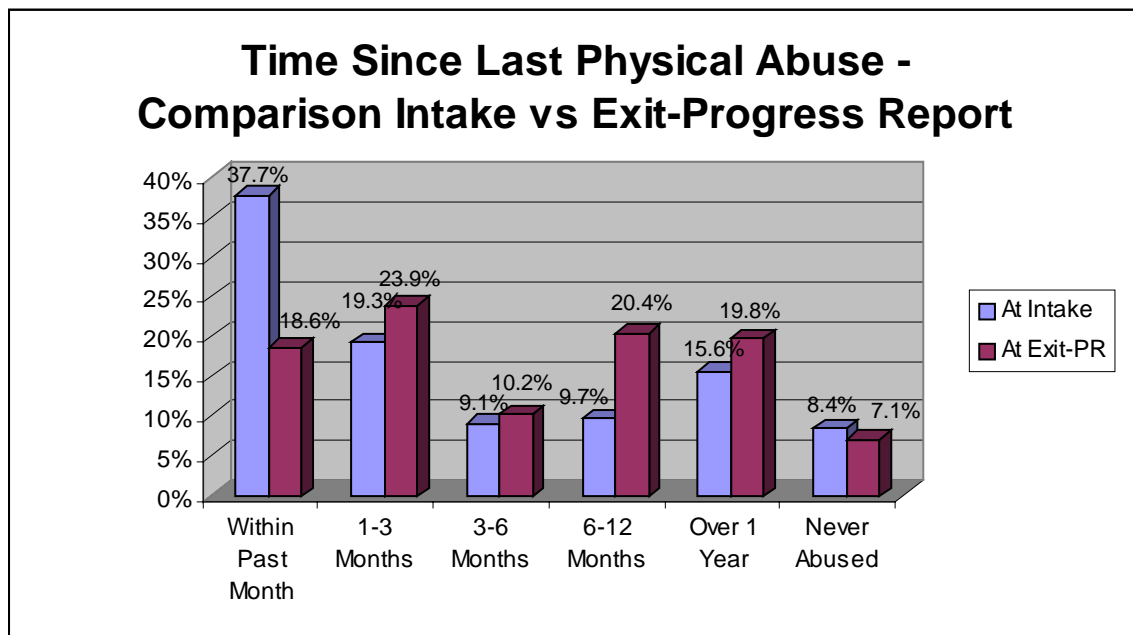
- Other common living situations at progress report time were: in a shelter or safehome (12.4%) or living with family (9.4%).
- About forty percent of the clients were employed either full-time or part-time for the progress report. This is comparable to percentage employed at intake (39%) but well below the percentage employed at the time of abuse (53.1%).
- Just over half of the clients (51.2%) reported receiving governmental financial assistance at progress report time, which is an increase over intake (43.8%).
- The average monthly income at exit was \$880. This was a slight drop in income from intake, when the average was \$960. Average incomes had risen slightly over the years from \$875 in 1995 to \$957 in 1999. Only one-quarter of the clients (24.3%) had incomes greater than \$1000/month.

### Criminal Justice Involvement

- A third of the clients had sought court orders (protection orders, restraining orders, etc.) since entering the program. This rate has held steady over the past five years.
- Of those seeking court orders since entering the program, the majority (83.9%) had a valid court order in effect at the time of the progress report. This represents 23% of all clients reporting at progress report time.
- Clients were also asked about court system and law enforcement involvement since entering the program. Approximately, one-quarter of the clients had had experience with each of these systems since entering the program. Of those who had, just over half reported that they considered the experience to be positive.

## Current Abuse Assessment

- Of those clients available to answer the progress report questions, less than a fifth (18.6%) reported that they had been physically abused in the past month. Almost half (47.3%) said it had been more than six months since they had been physically abused. This compares favorably with intake when twice as many victims (37.7%) reported physical abuse in the past month and only a third (33.7%) said it had been more than six months.



- Clients reported a corresponding decrease in emotional abuse. Three-quarters (75.2%) said that the emotional abuse had decreased while only 6.2% said that it had increased.
- Contact with the abuser was reduced along with the abuse. Over half of the clients (57.5%) reported that they no longer had any contact with the abuser. Just 13.3% reported that they were living in the same household. At intake 20.2% were living with the abuser and at the time of abuse 85.5% were living with the abuser.

## Outcomes

- The great majority of clients (93.8%) said that they thought their situation had improved as a result of using victim services. This percentage was constant over the five years. When asked to describe in what ways their situation was improved, most victims mentioned the social support and the time to get their lives back in order; 44.3% of the clients who responded to the question over the past two years listed this as the most important feature of services. Other frequently mentioned positive factors were:

Information/Knowledge on what to do	11 (15%)
Secured housing	11 (15%)
Safe location	8 (11%)
Legal intervention	7 ( 9%)

- Eighty-three percent of the clients believed their level of personal safety had improved since entering the program, with 44.2% saying it was “Much Improved.” Only 2.2% said it was worse. Less contact with the abuser was the most common explanation given for the increased sense of personal safety.



- Ninety-five percent of clients completing progress/exit reports could articulate a safety plan. Development of a safety plan is considered a valuable outcome for victim services clients. Safety plans are individualized plans, created with an advocate, to increase safety while living in an abusive situation. An example of a safety plan component would be identification of emergency contacts when abuse escalates. For victims continuing to live in abusive situations or still under threat of abuse, a safety plan may be the best strategy for improving their odds of survival.
- About four-fifths of the clients (81.1%) believed that their level of self-sufficiency had improved since entering the program; 36.6% that it was “Much Improved.” Self-sufficiency is important in that many victims remain in abusive situations because they do not believe they can survive without the support of their abusive partner. Establishing independence, then, is a precursor to leaving an abusive situation or remaining out of one.
- In the opinion of program staff, 28.5% of the clients served had an “Excellent” understanding of domestic violence and its dangers by the time of the progress report. Another 44.5% were considered to have a “Good” understanding. These percentages

increased over the five years of the study, from a combined total of 67.6% in 1995 to a total of 81.1% in 1999. As with safety planning, understanding domestic violence and its risks is a vital first step in moving clients to greater safety.

# Obstacles to Improving Victims' Situations

## Victims Speak Directly

Domestic violence victims entering the King County funded service system are routinely asked about the obstacles they see to improving their situations. Over the past two years, 58 victims took the opportunity to describe the barriers to their safety and self-sufficiency. The primary barriers they saw were:

Lack of financial resources/Lack of employment	14 (24%)
Continuing legal entanglements	13 (22%)
Lack of housing	12 (21%)
Continuing contact with the abuser	11 (19%)

### ➤ Lack of Financial Resources

Not surprising, sufficient financial resources is key to victims establishing independence and provides the wherewithal to leave an abusive situation. Without a secure means of support, victims and their children must survive in very tenuous circumstances or remain with the abuser. One victim, as reported to a staff member, described her obstacles as “Rebuilding her life in this state after moving from Idaho. Money, housing, job stability, and safety.”

### ➤ Legal Entanglements

Many of the victims remain embroiled in legal battles while seeking social services. Besides court cases directly related to the abuse, victims are often involved in divorce proceedings and child custody cases that drain limited resources of time, money, and emotional strength. Abusers sometimes use the legal entanglements to punish victims, as exemplified by the victim who told her advocate that the “Abuser is continuing to use the legal system to try and keep her from her children.”

### ➤ Lack of Housing

Lack of housing is closely tied to lack of financial resources. For victims leaving their spouses/partners, finding secure, permanent housing is an imminent priority. Housing is a prerequisite for acquiring employment and a necessity if the victim is to retain custody of the children. The expensive housing and rental markets in King County add to the problem.

### ➤ Continuing Contact with the Abuser

For many victims, continuing interaction with the abuser is the main obstacle to progress. Some victims wish to remain with the abuser and work things out together. But many wish to move on and greatly reduce or eliminate future contact. This becomes difficult when legal stipulations, such as joint child custody, or the abuser's insistence force continued contact. Usually, direct or implied threats of violence are the elements of contact that most upset the victims. As one victim told her advocate, the “abuser continues to show up around her house and then leaves before police come.”

## Conclusions

Following are the broader conclusions on the functioning of the Domestic Violence Victim Services system drawn through a thoughtful review of the information presented in this report.

➤ A more diverse population is now being served in the domestic violence victim services system than in 1995.

In 1995, 38.7% of the victims served were people of color. By 1999 that proportion had risen to nearly one half—48.8%. During the same time the number of victims requiring an interpreter almost doubled, from 7.9% to 14.6%. The service system has responded by tripling the average hours of interpreter service provided per client. Also, the system continues to add more culturally diverse programs, the latest being Chaya, an agency serving victims from south Asia. Programs serving refugee and immigrants report that responding to legal issues is the next large barrier to services that must be addressed in our increasingly diverse community.

➤ The system of domestic violence victim services provides a broad array of services extending throughout the county.

Over 2,000 domestic violence victims received direct services each of the five years covered by this report. Many other victims received one-time services, such as telephone consultations, information and service referrals. They came from all quadrants of the county, all ethnic groups and all economic classes. They were served in emergency shelters, mainstream community advocacy programs, culturally specific advocacy programs and transitional housing programs. In some cases, services were very brief and on other occasions services were provided over many years. The robustness of the service system is the result of a decades-long, consistent attention to needs of domestic victims and a determination at both the grass-roots and governmental levels to ensure needed services were provided. The next challenge for the system is the extension of services into the rural areas of King County. This has already begun with establishment of Vashon Island Domestic Violence Outreach Services program.

➤ Victims experience a significant change in life circumstances between time of abuse and the initiation of services, primarily in loss of income and household stability.

As data presented earlier in the report showed, at the time domestic violence victims seek services they have already suffered tremendous upheaval in their lives. In almost two-thirds (65%) of the cases the abuser had left the household between the last abuse incident and service intake. This usually meant that victims had begun living on their own or were now operating as single parents. And it means they were scrambling for housing. Fourteen percent had lost their jobs. Prior studies have shown that there is usually a significant drop of income accompanying the loss of jobs and household

stability. On-going legal entanglements, due to the abuse charges, protection orders or divorce proceedings, add to the disruption and uncertainty.

The upheaval continues during the service period. One indication of this is the high percentage of clients (37.2%) that can not be located to complete the exit forms. The number living with a spouse or partner continued to decrease from 17% at intake to 13% at the six month's progress report or exit. The number "living alone or with children only" grew from 35% at intake to 46% during the same period. Household income dropped further from an average of \$960 dollars at intake to \$880 at exit/progress report.

➤ Transitional housing for victims and their children has increased since 1995.

Housing has been one of victims' top three service needs but it has become more of an issue over the past five years. When asked what services they most needed, 45.8% said housing in 1995 and 52.9% in 1999. In 1995, 49.8% of the victims seeking service cited housing as an issue, by 1999 it was 55.4%. Service providers responded to this issue by directly providing transitional housing to 172 victims in 1999, up from 10 clients in 1995. When providers were unable to provide transitional housing directly they referred clients to housing services—450 in 1995, which increased to 543 in 1999. The percentage of referred clients who were successful in accessing housing also increased over the five years. In 1995, only 36.7% of the clients were successfully referred; in 1999 51.4% were successful.

➤ One of the growing service needs facing clients is legal assistance and advocacy.

Over the past five years, there has been a consistent increase in the demand for a variety of legal services. From 1995 to 1999, the demand for legal advocacy increased from 36.7% to 48.4%, for court advocacy from 19.6% to 23.9%, and for legal services from 29.7% to 36.9%. The reasons for this are unclear, although it does occur during the same period that criminal justice funding increased to provide legal advocacy to domestic violence victims and enhance prosecution of domestic violence cases.

➤ The majority of clients report benefit from services.

While many clients are unavailable to comment on the benefits of service (37.2%), of those responding almost all (93.8%) said they thought their situation had improved as a result of the services. Forty-four percent believed that their level of personal safety was much improved since entering the program and another 39% said there was some improvement. Regarding their self-sufficiency, 36.6% stated that their level of self-sufficiency was much improved and 44.5% said there was some improvement. Ninety-five percent of the clients could articulate a safety plan—a key component in increasing safety while living in an abusive situation. And, in the opinion of program staff, 28.5% of the clients had acquired an excellent understanding of domestic violence and its dangers.

Although victim services do not directly affect the batterer's abusive behavior, it is interesting to note that of the clients reporting most stated the physical abuse had decreased. Less than one fifth (18.6%) reported being abused in the past month versus 37.7% at time of intake. Much of this decrease is probably due to moving clients to safer environments—such as emergency shelters, safe homes and transitional housing.

➤ The range of available children's services does not meet the need.

There were more children involved in the domestic violence victim services system than there were adults. Over half of the victims entered service accompanied by children—an average of 1.9 children per family with children. Therapeutic child care is the primary service provided. Clients have listed needs for counseling services, food or clothing , and therapeutic group as frequently needed children services.

Evidence shows that children raised in abusive situations, even when not physically abused themselves, have a greater tendency to become involved in abusive situations as adults. This trend calls for greater attention to children services as a way of preventing future domestic violence.